

First Times Writing Workshop

Students walk away with continued :

- Exposure to poetry by diverse writers, focusing on race, gender and sexuality.
- Practice writing about one specific moment, using all five senses.
- Experience sharing casually with a small audience.

Section	Activity	Lead
	Welcome & Grounding	Welcome! Today we are going to get warmed up, read, discuss, write & maybe share.
	Icebreaker: List	Ask youth: What is your name and how would you describe your first day of school in one word?
		Pull out a piece of paper and turn it horizontal, hamburger style.
		Make a timeline of your life. On one side of the paper put your birthdate. Then put today. What are the markers of each age? Now, in particular, we would like you to consider first times.
	Poems & Analysis	Read Poem 1 by Megan Falley Hit: Extended metaphor. Ask about 5 senses.
		Read Poem 2 by Tonya Ingram Hit: Audience.
	Prompt	Looking at your timeline, consider, what are a few you could write about? Circle a few. Then, consider, just one of them. Consider the first time you realized your race.
		Consider your first kiss. Consider your first crush. For that one, start to list all five sense surrounding that moment.
	Writing	Pencil to paper silence. We encourage you to keep writing, as best as you can.
	Share & Reflect	Time to share. Set reminders for a safe space, aka: silence when someone shares, showing love, and supreme confidentiality.
		Finish this sentence on the tiny piece of paper and place it in the bag as you head out!

The First Time I Met His Mother

// Megan Falley

The first time I met his mother, Christmas Eve,
I offered to help carve the dinner beast,
which was how my meatless body knew I really loved him.
She didn't need my help. The adults would fix me a cocktail
in the backroom. I met the usual characters:
an aunt who cleaned up the spill of her giggle
with a paw over her lipsticked mouth. A cousin
who smelled like a bar fight, his wedding ring tarnished
as an ashtray. I told his uncle that I liked his tie, and I did.
It had real Christmas lights sewn into it, a ruby one for Rudolph's nose.
He suggested that if I was so fond of that tie, we could pretend
it was mistletoe, his tarantula hand creeping towards my knee.
Oh he's harmless! his mother explained away. *Just Uncle Lenny,*
a joke, in our family we can take a joke,
she warned, stringing a garland of excuses for him
being only a man. From then on, she looked at me like a gift
she wished came with a receipt, that her son
would exchange me for another, perhaps a doll
with a smaller mouth, soft legs that can't stand up for themselves,
a string in it's back that she could pull and unleash a fit
of mechanical laughter. It was funny, a joke, harmless.

The last time I met his mother, Valentines day.
She stood beside her son in the courtroom, proud,
like his date to an award ceremony, as I waited for the judge
to order five hundred feet between his cackle
and my ear, his groin and my *no*, his many sharp edges
and my body soft and scared as a dying lamb.
It was the first valentine I had ever given myself.
His mother sneered like I was a bitch walking on her hind legs,
an amusing stunt with a false sense of spine,
a little girl making monsters out of molehills.
But she never needed my help. She carved that beast herself.

Unsolicited Advice to Skinny Girls with Bitten Nails and Awkward Glances

after Jeanann Verlee // Tonya Ingram

When your best friend's father invites you over, say no.

When the girls at school tease you for wearing Payless leg ups, do not wrench your face. Smile and tie your laces.

When you finally learn how to Dougie and it's 2011, show off to everyone you know.

When you finally learn how to do the original Harlem Shake and it's 2011, keep it to yourself.

When your mother asks you to buy her a pregnancy test, do not slam the door behind you. Do not snatch the 20 from your birthright.

When she says that she is pregnant, do not sacred suck your teeth. Do not holy roll your eyes.

When the boy with the intrusive shadow calls you a white girl, do not cowl your head. Do not question you're Black.

When your grandmother says you act like an old lady, take it as a compliment. Set the tea pot, knit the turtle neck, check the apple pie.

When the next NYU student asks to touch your hair, laugh and ask if you can touch theirs.

When your best friend's father invites you over, say no.

When you catch your brother with a porno, act surprised, laugh it off. Do not call him a sinner.

When your mother asks why you take so long in the shower, tell her you hate this cancer, this dark that wears you like a plague.

When you discover your grandmother is bipolar and schizophrenic, hug her. Then Google each illness.

When you question if you are anything like her, hug yourself, then Google each illness.

When you cry in front of your brother because he has just learned that you are not his full sister, do not slump your shoulders. Your eyes are a wealth of thirsty crave. Pour into him.

When you visit your brother at Rikers Island, do not blink to hold back the tears.

You are Moses, he is the miracle, this is the Red Sea.

When your mother brings your sister home from the hospital, do not hide your hands. Do not fear you will drop her. She is a medallion in a collection plate of screws. Treasure her.

When the older woman with silver hair and loose teeth calls you a nigger, give her the finger. Give her Jay Z's The Blueprint. Give her the word of God.

When your mother's ex-boyfriend puts his hands on your brother, grab the chair. When your mother's ex-boyfriend puts his hands on your sister, grab the frying pan. When your mother's ex-boyfriend puts his hands on your mother, grab the phone, grab the knife, grab your voice. This is armageddon. This is taking back the ...[?].

Do not fear. Do not cower. Do not question.

When your best friend's father invites you over, say no.

You are resurrection.

You are silence turned shotgun
and death has no place here